

Silver Spring Justice Coalition Budget Testimony Overview

By Robert Landau

My name is Robert Landau, and I am a Gaithersburg resident. I speak today about the Silver Spring Justice Coalition's Operating Budget priorities, which I support.

Hundreds of SSJC members and organizations seek to eliminate harm caused by police and empower those communities most affected by policing.

Our coalition urges you to:

- One: Oppose MCPD's expansion of its Community Resources Bureau, which unnecessarily expands police presence and wastes taxpayer dollars for police to market themselves with significantly more community events.

- Two: Oppose the perpetuation of the CEO program. MCPS data shows that police are rarely needed to resolve student problems. There is, however, ample evidence that CEOs perpetuate the schools-to-prison pipeline. On balance the CEO program does more harm than good.

- Three: Invest more of the budget in robust restorative justice programs for MCPS, by having dedicated RJ staff, rather than only stipend positions. A recent MCPS presentation demonstrated that the rollout of RJ programs has been slow and unsteady. Funding for dedicated RJ staff will solve these problems quickly and effectively.

- Four: Oppose funding for MCPD budget items that perpetuate their "warrior" culture, such as 6 firearms specialists, high-powered rifles, drones, and other weapons. A commitment to a guardian culture should start with de-militarizing the police. Budgeting more money for guns and gun training tacitly encourages police to use guns more – not less.

- Five: Expand the budget for Mobile Crisis Outreach Teams, to enable trained mental health teams to respond to the 138 mental and behavioral health situations needing intervention that occur every day in our County. And, lastly, add more funding to HHS to offer competitive pay needed to fill their vacant positions, expand their services, and purchase specialized vehicles.